

New York City College of Technology
Interdisciplinary Committee

Criteria for an Interdisciplinary Course

I. Interdisciplinary Studies Definition

Interdisciplinary studies involve two or more academic disciplines or fields of study organized around synthesizing distinct perspectives, knowledge, and skills. Interdisciplinary study focuses on questions, problems, and topics too complex or too broad for a single discipline or field to encompass adequately; such studies thrive on drawing connections between seemingly exclusive domains. Usually theme-based, interdisciplinary courses intentionally address issues that require meaningful engagement of multiple academic disciplines. Pedagogical strategies focus on, but are not limited to, inquiry or problem-based learning.

Although many academic disciplines, such as African American Studies and Engineering, are inherently interdisciplinary, to be considered an interdisciplinary course at City Tech the course must be team-taught¹ by more than one faculty member from two or more departments² in the College. An interdisciplinary course, by definition, has an interdisciplinary theme as its nucleus. In its essence, such a course brings the analytic methods of two or more academic disciplines to bear on a specific problem or question. Thus, a course in Music History is not likely to be considered interdisciplinary, but a course in Music History from an economist's perspective might very well lead to such a course. The application of different methods and concepts is the key to assessing whether a course is or is not interdisciplinary. The term interdisciplinary is occasionally used to identify individual projects or assignments, but these, though possibly commendable, fall short in the necessary scope for learning experiences that demand in-depth exposure to the methodologies of distinct intellectual disciplines, and the creative application of these methodologies to specific problems.

Studies show that interdisciplinary courses improve student learning (Elrod & Roth, 2012; Klein, 2010; Lattuca, 2001; Lattuca, Voigt, & Fath, 2004; Project Kaleidoscope, 2011). To foster interdisciplinary learning, the Interdisciplinary Committee has identified goals and outcomes that students taking interdisciplinary courses should be able to achieve.

Learning Outcomes of Interdisciplinary Courses

Students will be able to:

- Purposefully connect and integrate across-discipline knowledge and skills to solve problems
- Synthesize and transfer knowledge across disciplinary boundaries
- Comprehend factors inherent in complex problems
- Apply integrative thinking to problem-solving in ethically and socially responsible ways
- Recognize varied perspectives
- Gain comfort with complexity and uncertainty
- Think critically, communicate effectively, and work collaboratively
- Become flexible thinkers

¹ See "Application for Interdisciplinary Course Designation" question 9b for team-teaching options.

² Exceptions are made for Departments that provide a home for multiple disciplines, such as Humanities and Social Science.

**New York City College of Technology
Interdisciplinary Committee**

Application for Interdisciplinary Course Designation

Date: 2016 03 18

Submitted by: Jason Montgomery and Susan Phillip

Department(s): Arch Tech + Hospitality + Library

II. Proposal to Offer an Interdisciplinary Course

1. Identify the course type and title:

☒ An existing course: LIB2205/ARCH2205

☐ A new course _____

☐ A course under development _____

2. **Provide a course description:**

This special topics course offers an interdisciplinary approach to investigating our built environment using a case study focused on a specific place each semester. This course combines physical examination with information research and data collection using methodologies developed in multiple disciplines. Students from a variety of departments engage in on-site exploration and in-depth research of a location in New York City.

3. **How many credits will the course comprise?** 3 **How many hours?** 1 classroom/ 4Lab 3 credits

4. **What prerequisite(s) would students need to complete before registering for the course? Co-requisite(s)?**

ENG 1101 and any Flexible Core Course

5. **Explain briefly why this is an interdisciplinary course:**

This section of LIB2205/ARCH2205 will examine place from the perspectives of architectural and urban studies as well as urban tourism, both in combination with research process and techniques in primary source research through the library faculty.

6. **What is the proposed theme of the course? What complex central problem or question will it address? What disciplinary methods will be evoked and applied?**

The theme of the course is using places to learn to see (observation) and reveal new knowledge (research). The central problem the course addresses is: how can places teach us to observe the world around us and help us broaden our knowledge and understanding of things in general, helping foster the desire and skills for lifelong learning? Careful observation skills of the physical environment will be developed through the lens of architectural investigation and research skills and data collection will be developed through the discipline of information studies.

Further, this course will be to seek to reveal the stories associated with places that are important to understanding it in regard to urban development and architectural significance but also culturally in regard to the history and meaning of the place. These stories will be central to the marketing of a place as part of an urban tour project.

7. Which general learning outcomes of an interdisciplinary course does this course address? Please explain how the course will fulfill the bolded mandatory learning outcome below. In addition, select and explain at least three additional outcomes.

☒ **Purposefully connect and integrate across-discipline knowledge and skills to solve problems**

Urban tourism and architecture are already linked topics, but each offers a different perspective as an entrée into primary source research. Here the questions of cultural significance will be solved by applying both perspectives in an integrated manner.

☒ **Synthesize and transfer knowledge across disciplinary boundaries**

The final report prepared by the students will require synthesizing the findings across the lines of research and disciplines to communicate a coherent story about the place.

☒ **Comprehend factors inherent in complex problems**

The case study project will challenge the students to come to terms with its breadth and level of complexity in the many layers of issues that need to be considered in the research process.

☐ **Apply integrative thinking to problem solving in ethically and socially responsible ways**

☐ **Recognize varied perspectives**

- Gain comfort with complexity and uncertainty

■ Think critically, communicate effectively, and work collaboratively

The final report development will require critical thinking as well as effective communication. Each student team will prepare the report together, requiring productive collaboration.

■ Become flexible thinkers

The case study will start as a wide open subject, and the direction of the investigation will only become clear as the work goes on. In this way it will challenge the students to become flexible in their attitude and thinking about the project.

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- Other

General Education Learning Goals for City Tech Students

- **Knowledge:** Develop knowledge from a range of disciplinary perspectives, and hone the ability to deepen and continue learning.
- **Skills:** Acquire and use the tools needed for communication, inquiry, creativity, analysis, and productive work.
- **Integration:** Work productively within and across disciplines.
- **Values, Ethics, and Relationships:** Understand and apply values, ethics, and diverse perspectives in personal, professional, civic, and cultural/global domains.

8. **How does this course address the general education learning goals for City Tech students?**

This course focuses on building the students' experience and skill of digging deeper into research, constructing knowledge from multiple disciplines. Inquiry is central to this course, as is communication of research findings. The students will work in an integrated manner, sharing diverse views on the research topic, and developing diverse lines of research related to the topic.

9. **Which department would house this course³?** Library Department

10. Would all sections of the course be interdisciplinary? ☐ No ☒ Yes

- a) Would the course be cross-listed in two or more departments? ☐ No ☒ Yes
Explain.

Will remain cross listed as LIB2205/ARCH2205.

- b) How will the course be team-taught⁴? ☒ Co-taught ☐ Guest lecturers ☐ Learning community

If co-taught, what is the proposed workload hour distribution?

Prof. Phillip: 2 hours

Prof. Montgomery: 2 hours

Library faculty: 1 hour

- c)
☐ Shared credits ☐ Trading credits
If guest lecturers, for what approximate percentage of the course? ☐ Minimum 20%⁵ ☐ other:
___%

Please attach the evaluation framework used to assess the interdisciplinarity of the course.⁶

- d) What strategies/resources would be implemented to facilitate students' ability to make connections across the respective academic disciplines?

On site activities will include didactic discussion between Prof. Phillip and Montgomery.
Assignment work will require urban and architectural examination that ties to cultural
context and historical significance as part of a the marketing for an urban tour.

11. Would the course be designated as:

³ An interdisciplinary course for the College Option requirement may be housed in a department that is not liberal arts.

⁴ Attach evidence of consultation with all affected departments.

⁵ While an interdisciplinary course must be team-taught, there is no formal percentage requirement, but this minimum is a guideline.

⁶ In the case that a course is equally taught, include proposed plans for faculty classroom observation and student evaluation of teaching.

☐ a College Option requirement⁷? ☐ an elective? ☐ a Capstone course⁸? ☐ other? Explain.

⁷ To qualify for the College Option, such a course must also meet the New York State definition of a liberal arts and sciences course. <http://www.highered.nysed.gov/ocue/lrp/liberalarts.htm>

⁸ A course proposed as a Capstone course must be separately approved by the Capstone Experience Committee.